

Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Sánchez voted to preserve seniors' access to their doctors by fixing the way Medicare pays physicians. The Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act will permanently reform the Medicare payment system, repealing a 21% cut in payments to doctors scheduled to take place in January and replacing it with a stable system that protects seniors, preserves their relationship with their doctors, and promotes primary care.

"By fixing this system in a responsible way we are ensuring that our seniors have reliable access to their doctors and the primary care they need," said Rep. Linda Sánchez. "Medicare is not a handout, it is a benefit that our seniors have earned, and this bill takes crucial steps toward strengthening it and providing the highest quality of care and benefits for retired and disabled Americans."

This bill tackles seniors' main concern - preventing pay cuts that could encourage doctors to stop seeing Medicare patients. It builds on the historic health insurance reform bill the House passed earlier this month, which will lower premiums, extend the solvency of Medicare by five years, improve preventive and primary care for seniors, and close the "donut hole" drug coverage gap.

"For California's seniors and those with disabilities, this is no abstract issue," said Rep. Sánchez. "Access to a doctor can mean everything for them: independence, hope, and security. This bill will lower costs and improve care for seniors, who put in a lifetime of hard work to make this country great."

To underscore a commitment to reduce the deficit, the House attached statutory "pay-as-you-go," or PAYGO, legislation to the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act before sending it to the Senate. By joining statutory PAYGO with legislation fixing Medicare physician payments, it makes PAYGO more credible and effective - avoiding the need to waive it for current policies that Congress and the President have already agreed should be extended - and sending a clear message that we are committed to fiscal responsibility.

"This is a direct example of Congress fulfilling a commitment to honest budgeting, and by permanently fixing the way doctors are paid we are putting a stop to budget gimmicks," said Rep. Sánchez. "We're also reminding the American people, as well as the U.S. Senate, that new policies must be paid for."

With statutory PAYGO in place, all new tax and entitlement policies must be offset, restoring fiscal discipline and bringing down the deep deficits that face our nation. By enacting statutory PAYGO, Democrats are putting an end to the reckless "borrow-and-spend" policies of the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress and reinstating the principle that led us from record deficits to record surpluses in the Clinton Administration.

###